

WASHINGTON – Today, the Committee on House Administration’s Subcommittee on Elections called upon officials from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to answer questions regarding its operating procedures and whether or not partisan interests had influenced its decision making. The EAC was formed following the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to assist states and localities in a bi-partisan manner with the administration of federal elections.

Witnesses, including Election Assistance Commission Chairwoman Donetta Davidson, testified as to the agency’s commitment to remaining bi-partisan and detailed improvements being made to increase confidence in the EAC and its independence. “We have started putting all of our reports on a virtual web site to our Committees, the Standards Board, the Advisory Board and that is public information,” said Davidson, “we are trying to be far more transparent.” The Commissioner also stressed that with better information, better reports will be generated. “If we have good data,” said Davidson, “we won’t have to make any conclusions at the EAC.”

While some have characterized the EAC as being unduly influenced through its association with the Department of Justice (DoJ), which has two representatives on its Advisory Board, the EAC official’s testimony revealed no such relationship. When Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., asked if anyone on the Commission had sought to “manipulate” two election studies in any way, Davidson replied, “Absolutely not.” When Subcommittee Chairwoman Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., pressed further, asking Davidson if the executive branch agency attempted to exert editorial control of EAC generated reports, Davidson said that in her dealings with the DoJ, “there wasn’t any pressure at all from their agency.”

Dr. Robert S. Montjoy, Professor of Political Science at the University New Orleans and an elections expert, testified as to the role of the EAC, and the challenges it faces as it continues to mature. “As you know, the EAC is a young agency. The first commissioners were confirmed in 2003, and the position of executive director was not filled until 2005. Like all new agencies it has had to acquire staff, establish internal operating procedures, and work out relationships with other parties in its task environment (such as NIST and DOJ),” said Montjoy. “Still, the Commission has produced a number of reports and advisories that are valuable to policy makers and administrators at all levels of government.”

“Today’s oversight hearing helped us understand the work of the Election Assistance Commission, and I appreciated the commissioners’ work in continuing to improve transparency and access to election information,” said McCarthy. “The hearing also provided us with an

opportunity to better understand the process that occurred with two election studies, and dispel some of the conspiracy theories of those who doubt the intentions of the bipartisan commission.”

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.